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slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations

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slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations

Posted on August 1, 2009 by Editor

Review by Maria Walters

When you boil any form of communication down &emdash; a conversation, an article, a book, a presentation &emdash; what it really is, is a story. This is one of the guiding premises of Nancy Duarte’s book, slide:ology. As the Principal of Duarte Design, the firm whose claim to fame is creating the presentation for Al Gore’s film An Inconvenient Truth, Nancy Duarte is still noticeably involved in the theory and principles of design and public speaking, as well as being a great storyteller. Interestingly, the story that she tells in this book is about how to tell a better story orally and visually.

Because of the challenges of writing about a presentation instead of giving one, this book reaches beyond the realms of traditional books. The striking full-color volume is packed full of diagrams, examples, and case studies, as well as more traditional descriptions of what to do and why. To flip through some of the pages, check out the online preview [1]. The book is also accompanied by a helpful website [2] and a free 45 day access to the online edition of slide:ology through Safari Books Online, which is discussed more below [3].

The book itself is part speech coach, part visual design instructor, and all inspirational. The bulk of it deals, unsurprisingly, with designing slides: layout, templates, color and diagram choices, etc. Each chapter deals first with the theory, explaining why color choices matter and how the audience perceives what is being presented. The overriding theme is clarity and simplicity, which is emphasized through the design of each page, with plenty of white space (“visual breathing room” [4]) and examples. Most chapters include at least one case study, describing successful presenters who have used the techniques outlined (often clients of Duarte Design), and most case studies include online links where the reader can actually watch the presentation being presented instead of described, or download PowerPoint templates, allowing the reader to use the techniques themselves. [5]

The design aspect of the book is introduced and concluded with chapters on the importance of
good presentation practices in general. The reasons for minimizing the content on slides is to both remove the safety blanket for speakers and put the weight of communication on them instead of on information typed onto the slides, so speakers have to be motivated to change their presentation styles as well as the look of their slides. In fact, Duarte even speaks to the times when it would be better not to give a presentation: when slides feature text heavily, Duarte uses Garr Renolds' term “slideuments” [6] and recommends that, as a speaker, you must “trust that your audience is smart enough to read and circulate your slides as a document” [7].

Of course, we can’t fully review this book in Interface without also looking at its integration into the web. The book looks exactly the same on Safari Books Online, though the striking two-page spreads don’t have the same visual impact when viewed one page at a time on a browser. Navigation is clear, and breaks the book into clearly titled chapters and subchapters. Though there are options for a “Print Fidelity View” and “HTML View”, the HTML was disabled for this book &emdash; understandable, considering the complexity and importance of the layouts. Some might find it difficult to read in the PDF form, especially since the page zoom only has two size options. However, a link at the bottom of the page directs users with special needs to e-mail or call for a specific portal to the same material in an easier format [8].

One of the best features of Safari Books Online is the list of links it displays below each page showing chapters of other books covering similar subjects. This selection takes place using Self-Organizing Maps (SOM), described as a neural network algorithm. However, I was disappointed that, though many of the book’s pages showed links to the site accompanying the book or other online resources, these links were not active, nor shown on any part of the Safari site.

slide:ology was both an informative and enjoyable read. Duarte has a way of being encouraging and inspiring, even while pointing out errors that I, for one, have made countless times. Especially geared toward professionals who are giving presentations regularly, this book is worth a look by anyone who might be watching or giving a presentation in the future. The biggest downside: you’ll never be able to sit through a traditional PowerPoint presentation again!

Endnotes


12 THOUGHTS ON “SLIDE:OLOGY: THE ART AND SCIENCE OF CREATING GREAT PRESENTATIONS”

**weight loss diet tips for women**  
on January 28, 2014 at 8:51 PM said:

Today, while I was at work, my sister stole my iphone and tested to see if it can survive a twenty five foot drop, just so she can be a youtube sensation. My iPad is now destroyed and she has 83 views. I know this is entirely off topic but I had to share it with someone!

**Stacy Maha**  
on January 30, 2014 at 6:12 PM said:

you are truly a good webmaster. The site loading speed is amazing. It seems that you’re doing any unique trick. Also, The contents are masterwork. you’ve done a magnificent task on this subject!

**fat loss factor review**  
on February 1, 2014 at 11:35 AM said:

Hi there! Someone in my Myspace group shared this site with us so I came to take a look. I’m definitely loving the information. I’m bookmarking and will be tweeting this to my followers! Terrific blog and amazing style and design.

**Weight loss Myths Revealed**
Hey There. I discovered your blog the use of msn.

This is a very well written article. I will be sure to bookmark it and return to learn more of your helpful info. Thank you for the post. I’ll certainly return.

spinal decompression Columbus

on February 1, 2014 at 10:46 PM said:

A combination of various different factors have led many people from industrialized countries to migrate in order to get high quality medical treatment. By accessing charts from virtually anywhere, nephrologists can review and sign charts from home or any other clinical setting where the professional might be working. Herbal medicine has become the second most used medicine in the world.

blonnik witalny

on February 1, 2014 at 10:47 PM said:

Very shortly this site will be famous amid all blogging users, due to it’s nice content

blonnik witalny

on February 3, 2014 at 1:19 AM said:

Heya i’m for the first time here. I came across this board and I in finding It really useful & it helped me out a lot. I am hoping to present something again and aid others such as you helped me.
africa  
on **February 4, 2014 at 10:18 AM** said:

We are a group of volunteers and starting a brand new scheme in our community. Your web site provided us with valuable information to paintings on. You have performed an impressive job and our entire neighborhood can be thankful to you.

nigeria entertainment news  
on **February 4, 2014 at 10:30 AM** said:

Thank you for sharing very good information. Your web site is really cool. I am impressed by the facts that you have on this site. It reveals how nicely you understand this subject. Bookmarked this web site page, will arrive back for a lot more articles.

nigeria entertainment news  
on **February 4, 2014 at 10:39 AM** said:

Hi there! I know that is kinda off topic nevertheless I’d figured I’d ask. Would you be interested in trading links or maybe guest writing a blog article or vice-versa? My web site addresses many the exact same subjects as yours and I believe we could greatly benefit from every other. In case you happen to become interested feel free to send me an e-mail. I seem forward to hearing from you! Terrific blog by the way!

masaż w łodzi  
on **February 5, 2014 at 3:21 AM** said:

Thanks for another great article. The place else may anyone get that kind of info in such a perfect manner of writing? I have a presentation subsequent week, and I am on the look for such info.
cork board ideas

on February 5, 2014 at 11:52 AM said:

Good post. I learn something totally new and challenging on blogs I stumbleupon everyday. It will always be helpful to read articles from other authors and use a little something from their sites.